



// Sue Vinje Trucking spent \$5 million on improvements and system upgrades in 2013 to improve fuel economy and benefit its drivers.

Happy Motoring

SUE VINJE TRUCKING PROVIDES THE BEST EQUIPMENT, TRAINING AND BENEFITS FOR ITS DRIVERS TO KEEP THEM HAPPY ON THE ROAD.

> SUE VINJE TRUCKING INC.

At Sue Vinje Trucking Inc., managers know that despite recent technological developments in automobiles, trucks do not yet drive themselves. "Our big thing is good-quality drivers," CFO Carl Svendsen emphasizes. "They get treated with the utmost respect. I feel in many ways we go above and beyond for our drivers. I was stunned at how much we do for our employees here and how valuable the employees are to the company."

Sue Vinje Trucking serves 48 states and Canada with its temperature-controlled and dry van air ride trailers. "We know how hard it is to get a driver and how hard it is to keep them," Svendsen continues. "We work very hard to make sure we give the drivers a good quality of life and give them the miles they want so we retain them. It's a lot easier to keep a driver than to get one, and we'd rather keep the drivers we have. Any time we

can add a good, safe, quality driver, we're always happy to take that driver. If we have 52 trucks full and find someone to drive a 53rd truck, we'll go lease one."

The company has 26 percent driver turnover annually for its fleet of 60 53-foot air ride refrigerated trucks and five 53-foot air ride dry vans. "Our specialty is temperature-controlled or refrigerated freight," Svendsen says. "Our three major outbound customers are seafood and turkey companies, and the third is a paper company. We have a sea-

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Sue Vinje Trucking Inc.

www.svtrucking.com

Headquarters: Superior, Wis.

Specialty: Temperature-controlled and dry van trailers

food customer that we run for from Motley, Minn., to Seattle and back. We haul paper or turkey products out to California. A lot of times we get wine and bring it back. We haul pretty much everything you can put in a reefer.”

Drivers who become certified to carry hazardous materials receive an extra 2 cents for every mile they drive regardless of whether the load is hazardous. “Less than 2 percent of our freight is hazmat,” Svendsen notes. “Drivers can give themselves a raise by getting that certification.”

Sue Vinje Trucking’s managers understand that good drivers need good equipment. “We spent \$5 million on capital improvements and system upgrades in 2013,” Svendsen says. “Our oldest trucks are 2012 models. We have 10 2012s left, and the remainder of our trucks are 2013s and 2014s.” Sue Vinje’s typical trailers have two axles with six tires each. “We find it provides the best fuel economy,” Svendsen maintains.

Fuel Economy

Sue Vinje’s tractors have cruise controls and speed limiters that keep them from exceeding 65 miles per hour to save on fuel. They have a tight gap between the tractor and the trailer and farings above the cab to send air up over the trailer. TrailerTails fit on all sides of the trailers’ rears and UnderTrays are mounted under

the trailer in the center between the front and rear sets of tires to improve the trucks’ aerodynamics and reduce fuel consumption.

The way in which a truck is driven

also can impact fuel economy. To encourage fuel-efficient driving, Sue Vinje Trucking has established an incentive for drivers of up to 2 cents per mile for achieving the best fuel



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*Source: Impact of Ride Quality on Truck Driver Health & Safety. A TCA Member Fleet Case Study, March 11, 2014.

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economy they can with their trucks, such as with more gradual acceleration, or driving at 62 miles per hour.

“We have a safety and performance bonus of 3 cents per mile calculated quarterly and paid annually,” Svendsen adds. “Every August, some drivers get a really big check.”

Svendsen knows that good training creates good drivers, so drivers who train a new driver receive a penny for each mile that their trainee drives. If a trainee drives 130,000 miles, a penny per mile can add up to a substantial bonus for a trainer.

“We want to teach the new drivers the right way to drive,” Svendsen says. “The driver will call his trainer when he has an issue, and this is an incentive for that trainer to keep a good and positive relationship, to encourage that trainee to stay. A lot of these guys have no idea what it’s like to be an over-the-road trucker, so the trainers not only teach how to drive, but also life on the road.”

Better Seats

Sue Vinje’s tractors include inverters to convert DC battery power to AC for plug-in appliances such as portable coffee pots, televisions or refrigerators in the cab. They also feature mobile communication units and special drivers’ seats that reduce vibration and bumps.

“It’s a little bit funny for the drivers,” Svendsen concedes. “They feel the seat is moving, but the truck is moving around while the driver is held in position. The seats leave the drivers more rested at the end of the day, not getting jarred as they go down the road. We have a couple drivers with back issues. They really don’t have them as much anymore. The real objective is to keep our drivers more comfortable and extend the longevity of the drivers’ careers. The intent is to give the drivers the best possible



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conditions for themselves, their bodies and their lifestyles.”

Sue Vinje employees have free access to a healthclub one mile from the headquarters. Employees also can consult with a health and wellness coordinator provided by Sue Vinje’s sister company, Halva Lines.

In 2013, employees volunteered to form teams for a weight loss competition with Halva Lines. Participants worked out with a trainer at the health club twice weekly and ate according to a meal plan. “We lost over 13 percent of our body weight in 10 weeks,” Svendsen declares. “We did everything to make it competitive and fun, and in the end, we were proud to have a couple very successful teams.”

Two Mechanics on Staff

Sue Vinje Trucking’s tractors are equipped with bunk heaters rather than auxiliary power units so drivers need not idle their trucks to keep the heat running in colder temperatures. “APUs are as much work to keep running as the truck,” Svendsen maintains.

The company has two staff mechanics on call 24 hours daily. “Most of our service is performed onsite,” Svendsen says. “Some of the bigger jobs we may send to our dealer partners, but for the most part, the service and regular and preventive maintenance takes place in our shop.”

Sue Vinje Trucking was founded in 1998 by Susan Vinje, who had been a dispatcher for her father at Halvor Lines for more than 20 years when she decided to found her own company with a fleet of 12 tractors. She retired in August 2013, but her son, Ryan Frailey, is president, and her other son, Jon Vinje, is a driver at the company.

“Sue still has a definite presence here, and she and Ryan created something very special as far as the atmosphere here,” Svendsen maintains. “The intent was to maintain that and move forward as Sue wanted.” For the future, the company plans to continue expanding its operations. “We’re always looking for opportunities for growth and great drivers,” Svendsen concludes. 🌈